

Message Text

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14

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TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION - SDLP WALKS OUT OF
TALK WITH UUUC

REF: BELFAST 68 AND PREVIOUS

1. IN SERIES OF INTER PARTY TALKS IMPORTANT MEETING
BETWEEN PRINCIPAL LEADERS MAINLY-CATHOLIC SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) AND UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION
(UUUC) FEB. 12 ENDED WITH WALK-OUT AFTER ONE AND ONE HALF
HOURS BY SDLP. SUBSTANCE OF MEETING TOOK MUCH LESS TIME.
ALTHOUGH IT AGREED IN ADVANCE EACH SIDE TO BE REPRESENTED
BY FOUR PEOPLE, UUUC HAD TEN AT TALK AND MEETING BEGAN
WITH READING PREPARED STATEMENT BY UUUC LEADER HARRY
WEST. STATEMENT DEFINED PARAMETERS OF DISCUSSION IN
ACCORDANCE WITH GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED BY SECRETARY
OF STATE AND INCLUDED REPETITION LOYALIST REFUSAL DISCUSS
OR NEGOTIATE CABINET POSITIONS IN "PARTNERSHIP"
SITUATION. AFTER BRIEF INTERCHANGE SDLP THEN ASKED FOR
ADJOURNMENT AND FOLLOWING INTERNAL DISCUSSION
RETURNED, READ SHORT STATEMENT TO EFFECT UUUC REFUSAL TO
DISCUSS PARTNERSHIP WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH BRITISH
GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND, AS UUUC CALLED FOR RULING BY
CONVENTION CHAIRMAN ON LAST POINT, WALKED OUT.

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2. IN LOW BLOW IAN PAISLEY SUBSEQUENTLY VOICED SUSPICION THAT SDLP WALK OUT WAS INVOLVED WITH DEATH OF HUNGER-STRIKER FRANK STAGG (SEPTTEL). SDLP POSITION IS THAT POLITICAL SETTLEMENT MUST BE ON BASIS REPRESENTATION BOTH COMMUNITIES AT HIGHEST LEVEL OF DEVOLVED LOCAL GOVERNMENT. FOR UUUC CABINET CAN ONLY BE FORMED ON BASIS MAJORITY WILL AS EXPRESSED BY ELECTORATE. FURTHER, IN SERIES RALLIES AND, ACCORDING TO SDLP AT MEETING YESTERDAY, UUUC HAS MADE IT CLEAR IT WOULD NOT SIT IN CABINET WITH REVRESENTATIVES FROM SDLP "IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES."

3. SDLP NOW BELIEVES IT UNABLE EVEN EXPLORE FURTHER LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE SYSTEM AS PROPOSED BY UUUC CONVENTION REPORT. SDLP RAISED SUBJECT FEB. 12 WITH REGARD TO MEMBERSHIP ON ALL-IMPORTANT COMMITTEE OF SECURITY AND, ACCORDING TO SDLP PARTICIPANT, LEARNED THAT UUUC CONCEPT WAS THAT "COMMITTEES NOT INSTRUMENTS OF CABINET, BUT INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL." CABINET OR MINISTER COULD OVERRULE ANY COMMITTEE DECISION. SDLP EFFORTS TO DISCUSS AMERICAN-STYLE COMMITTEE SYSTEM REPORTEDLY REBUFFED.

4. WHILE DIVIDED ON ISSUE SDLP WILL PROBABLY FINALLY NOT RECOMMEND A REFERENDUM ON VOLUNTARY COALITION. ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD PROBABLY NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSE IT AS A FINAL BRITISH INITIATIVE BEFORE FORMAL ADOPTION OF CONTINUED DIRECT RULE, LEADING ELEMENTS IN SDLP DO NOT BELIEVE REFERENDUM FOLLOWED BY COALITION WOULD WORK. THINKING IS THAT EVEN SHOULD REFERENDUM FAVOR COALITION SUBSEQUENT ELECTION MIGHT PRACTICALLY REJECT IT. SHOULD MINORITY COALITION BY SOME MIRACLE ACHIEVE MAJORITY POPULAR VOTE, SDLP LEADERS BELIEVE LOYALISTS THEN IN MINORITY POSITION WOULD EXERCISE POWER TO PREVENT GOVERNMENT FROM FUNCTIONING.

5. OUTLOOK FOR SDLP AS PARTY IS GLOOMY UNDER DIRECT RULE. UNLESS SOME FORMULA CAN BE FOUND TO RETAIN FUNCTION OF MEMBERS AS REPRESENTATIVES OF CONSTITUENTS, PARTY WILL DISAPPEAR. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, LEAVE ONLY ALLIANCE UNCLASSIFIED

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PARTY AND VARIOUS REPUBLICAN GROUPS AS VOICES FOR HALF A MILLION RESIDENTS. DISAPPEARANCE OF SDLP WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE REGRETTEED BY DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS (PAISLEY) AND UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST MOVEMENT (BAIRD) TWO OF THREE LEGS OF TRI-PARTITE UUUC. IT BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT FOR THESE GROUPS, EXTIRPATION OF PROVISIONAL IRA AND EXTINGUISHING OF ANY ASPIRATION TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH IRISH REPUBLIC ARE PREREQUISITES

FOR ANY FORM OF INTER-COMMUNITY ACCOMODATION IN NORTHERN
IRELAND. EVEN RELATIVELY MODERATE OFFICIAL UNIONISTS
BELIEVE CATHOLICS CAN BEST WORK TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT
LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS BY JOINING UNIONIST PARTY.

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